Efficiency of Steel Companies

2640. SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state the details of steps taken or proposed to be taken for improving efficiency and to enhance productivity, to make the Indian steel cost- competitive in international market?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): Government have taken several steps to improve efficiency and to enhance productivity so as to make Indian steel cost- competitive in international market. These include:

(i) Providing financial support to R&D ventures in Iron and Steel sector.

(ii) Upgradation/modernisation of public sector steel plants.

(iii) Encouraging research and development activities with financial assistance from Steel Development fund (SDF)

(iv) Encouragement to reduction in energy consumption.

(v) Promotion of new products and new technologies.

(vi) Stress on value added products.

(vii) Increasing use of the evolving software technology.

(viii) Improvement of the supply management chain and logistics networks.

(ix) Setting up of different institutes/organisations for development of skilled manpower to help the industry.

Steel Companies Request for Review of Interest Rate

2641. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item captioned "Prices Boomerang on steel companies" published in the Business Standard dated the 3rd July, 2002;

(b) if so, the details in this regard;

(c) whether it is a fact that some of the steel companies have

approached the Financial institutions to review and raise their earlier request of lowering the interest rates as part of the debt restructuring plans; and

(d) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY): (a) and (b) The news item captioned Prices boomerang on steel companies appearing in 'Business Standard' of 3rd July, 2002 has come to the notice of the Government. It has been reported in the news items that on account of recent upward trend in steel prices, financial institutions have shown their disinclination to lower their lending rates or restructure the debts of the steel units that had approached them in this regard.

(c) and (d) It has been reported that certain individual steel companies had approached the financial institutions for reduction in interest rates/ restructuring of debts. Such requests are considered by the financial institution in their commercial judgement depending upon the financial soundness and credit worthiness of individual borrowers.

Revamping the NSS

2642. SHRI K.M. KHAN: Will the Minister of YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any plan to revamp and restructure the National Service Scheme (NSS) in school and colleges;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of villages/slums adopted under the scheme, State-wise;

(d) whether any stipend/honorarium or monetary benefit is given to students, for participating in the scheme; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS (SHRI P. RADHAKRISHNAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Information is given in the statement (*See* below).